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Discussed are some sociological theories about instability in black ghettos, the Negro social class structure, and some policy implications derived from such analyses. The point of departure for this document is Norton Long's theory that ghetto unrest is a result of the absence of a black middle class. The consequent lack of Negro middle class leadership results in an unstable lower class community without brokers to act as middle men between whites and blacks. An assessment of this theory raises some questions of its relevance to current conditions--class antagonism within the black community, the urban crisis, economic factors, and the radical search for a different society. (NH)

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SOCIAL STABILITY

and

BLACK GHETTOES

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Nathan Glazer recently commented that one of the glaring omissions in the analysis of the Report of the Commission of the Civil Disorders is its failure to adequately take account of the middle class Negro and the secure working class Negro in their interpretation of the causes of urban unrest. This is the missing man in the present crisis. And yet he must be a key factor both in the analysis of the problem ... and in the solution of the problem.[1] Conservative political leaders have also developed a somewhat similar argument. Nixon has recently suggested that all black militants want is "' a share of the wealth and a piece of the action.' This required,... measures that would help produce the 'black ownership' from which would flow 'black pride, black jobs, black opportunity, and, yes, black power'" [2]

Why do conservative political leaders like Nixon support black power? The Glazer thesis about the missing middle man hints at the reasons why the political near right would support

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1 Nathan Glazer, The Problem with American Cities, New Society, March 21st, 1968.
2. New York Times, May 19, 1968.

what appears to be a program based upon a more radical ideology. The development of a Negro middle-class appeals to the concerns about social stability, control of lower class culture and the restoration of a broken role to enable whites to negotiate with blacks. Hence there appears to be a powerfully "conservative" network for black power, What Glazer hints at Norton Long develops into a coherent articulate analysis.

Norton Long's paper on "Politics and Ghetto Perpetuation, provides an interpretation of the role of the missing man in today's urban social unrest and the policy implications which derive from the analysis. Long's paper is an attempt to formulate a theory about Ghetto instability.

Long's position can be briefly summarized as follows. In American society other ethnic-commercial enclaves have created a government and economy of their own and from this political and economic base a social structure has emerged which assures social stability. However, the pattern in the Negro community is significantly different. Here a truncated occupational structure has developed which is dominated by lower class Negroes, certainly a noticeable absence of commercial interests and with control largely residing in the White community. " The Negro middle class until recently has been escapist (and)... where it cannot physically flee it has sought physical co-existance and spiritual isolation.... The outstanding fact is that middle class Negroes do not govern the Ghetto. They are

afraid of it. We thus confront a community with a unique lower class culture made possible by a missing middle class and control by an alien race. The result of the failure of self-government has been a distrust of leaders and the emergence of the lower class as the only authentic and indigenous culture. The combination of these ingredients have produced political instability and an economy of the hustle," "cashing-in" and the welfare dole and "a social incapacity to mobilize resources." "The costs of a purely lower class culture of immediate consumption have been a failure to make use of the economic avenues of upward mobility."

This, then, is an interpretation of the causes of social unrest. The solution lies in creating a black middle class. A transition of leadership is needed, not dissimilar to the colonial transition when blacks are taught self-government by departing white rulers. " The key question is whether there exists or can rapidly be produced sufficient middle class cadres to govern the black governed city... the greatest fear is clearly that the middle class Negroes ... cannot dominate the lower class culture of Ghetto life." Presumably then, the Negro middle class leadership can more effectively police its own lower class culture if it had both the authority and the capability of exercising that leadership. By altering the truncated structure in black communities it would be possible

"to break the debilitating dependence on white financing."

A somewhat parallel argument can be found in the long tradition in the sociological theory of deviance. In the work of Znaniecki and Thomas near the turn of the 20th Century, and in the research inspired of the Chicago area School of Sociologists in the 1930's, and in some Community Action Programs, we find a similar theory about the restoration of the leadership and authority would contribute toward the creation of greater community cohesion, as the old ethnic leaderships are able to reassert their control over a more Americanized youth.[1] This theory of causes of delinquency and crime saw the solution as resting in a competent community in which established middle class leadership would be able to effectively control its own affairs, including the policing of its youth. Competence could be achieved through the processes of community organization and citizen participation, for the purposes of leadership development.

The theory then is that an economically integrated community is more likely to be a socially stable one. Class, rather than race, seems, according to this interpretation, to be more crucial in understanding the sources of social unrest.

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1. For a discussion of this theory see Peter Marris and Martin Rein, Dilemmas of Social Reform: Poverty and Community Action in the United States, New York; Atherton Press, 1967.

As individuals improve their situation they leave behind a community lacking in stable leadership and, therefore, unable to control its members, and especially its young. Clearly, then, there is much to commend this argument.

An Assessment of the Theory and the Policies Based on it.

I wish only to pose some questions about the validity, effectiveness, and relevance of the thesis set forth above, which must in the end, rest on the assumption that the strategies of reform which held in the past apply as well to events today. But at least some of the following questions may be posed.

The colonial model calls for a transition period where leadership is transferred from the white to the black community. During the intervening period training for leadership is crucial. However, black leaders criticize the argument because they feel that capability already exists in the Ghetto. Perhaps it is unlettered but it is also shrewdly intelligent with a demonstrated capability of adapting with creativity and ingenuity to an exploitative environment. Acording to this interpretation social unrest is the product of a revolt against exploitation, rather than the incompetence of the middle class to police and to govern its own lower class.

Yet another objection might be raised concerning the motive on the part of some white political leaders to encourage various aspects in the development of black power, namely the

middle man. White America tries to create a black middle class leadership, to act as a broker, as a middle man between the white and the black community. White political leaders have no one to negotiate with during periods of confrontation. They are dismayed by a political style which demands morality and justice but lacks a concrete program with negotiable terms. The insistence on leadership this arises not so much from the desire to create an orderly transition from white domination to black control, but rather out of the wish to create the machinery in which a dialogue between the rulers and the ruled can be restored.

Thus far I have tried to ask whether the theory is valid and whether the colonial analogy illuminates or obscures the underlying motives behind urban social unrest. But even if we acknowledge the validity of the theory, respect what it is, we need to inquire as to whether it can be effective in the political and economic environment of the 1960's. These factors will be briefly considered:

1. Class antagonism within the black community is very deep. Anger against the "Uncle Toms" is quite different than the anger against the "lace curtain Irish," who by "buying in" were seen as having"sold out." Hence the middle class broker role may be much harder to play today, both in terms of policing the lower class and negotiating with the white middle class. But

it is not only that black leaders may not represent their constituencies, neither can white leaders deliver programs which require state and federal resources which they cannot control locally.

The rise of a Negro middle class if accompanied by the failure of the lower income groups to also improve their situation may create within the black community two nations as internally divided from each other as black are from white communities. If the rise of the Negro middle class fails to improve the relative position of the lower class as well, the growth of inequalities will result in more inestability. The same arguments that apply when whites are compared to blacks hold as well within the Negro community. Reducing inequalities within the negro community is more crucial in producing tranquility than the creation of an elite middle class. Accordingly, the theory that increased affluence of Negro middle class contribute toward social stability seems a doubtful proposition. Some attempts to study political stability in developing societies have also demonstrated that a marginal increase in wealth if not accompanied by the reduction of inequalities can lead to political inestability.

2. Cities in the United States are suffering a financial, administrative, political and economic crisis which is as deeply disturbing as the crisis of social unrest and rioting. Thus the transfer of power from whites to blacks may not be much of

a prize today. Political control by blacks over a financially starved but decentralized school system or community action program may serve only to intensify the sense of frustration, as those responsible for directing these projects now understand. Moreover, as the conflict between butter and guns intensifies (as witnessed by the six billion dollar expenditure cut by the Federal Government) the amount of resources to urban schools and poverty programs may in the face of inflation and rising populations actually decline, thus forcing these benefit systems to act as rationing devises in the distribution of scarcity. Some economists feel that the military budget in the post Vietnam era will not be substantially reduced. Accordingly, if no effective pressure for reducing military expenditure is developed even after the war, the clash between bread and guns may continue. Rationing of social services will, of course, require further exclusion from institutions and the intensification of the alienation which black control is designed to reduce.

But curiously, social progress as well as urban failure make the transfer to black power even more difficult. "Fifty years of social reform," Moynihan asserted, "has pretty well destroyed the basis of working class politics in this country."[1] He was, of course, referring to those reforms which were aimed

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1. Daniel P. Moynihan, "The Politics of Stability," a paper presented at the National Board Meeting, Americans for Democratic Action, September 23, 1967.

at breaking the power of political bosses to distribute patronage by their control of city jobs. Thus the creation of Civil Service Commission was designed at least in principle, to assure that impartial criteria were used in the hiring of public officials.. Clearly efforts are being made to reverse these patterns, we have come to learn the socially useful functions of what earlier liberal reformers defined as corruption. Moynihan persuasively presents the case as follows:

> "Having destroyed the power of the local bosses, we learn that the people feel powerless. Having put an end to patronage and established merit systems in civil service, we find the poor unqualified and without jobs, Having banished felons from public employment, we find enornous numbers of men who need jobs have criminal records." 1

There has been an assault on these liberal reforms. For example, credentialism has been challenged as a criteria of exclusion, rather than a measure of quality. We have been urged to use performance criteria. One rationale to support this position can be briefly summarized. Employers have tended to overdefine the competencies which are needed to perform occupational jobs, hence our trained workers are more likely to experience frustrations which effect the quality of their work, The lowering of academic and social standards may thus enhance rather

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1. New York Times, June 5, 1968.

than erode the quality of employment outputs.[1] The hiring of nonprofessionals and the bypassing of the Civil Service requirements are also illustrative of this trend.away from credentialism. If control of social services, jobs and education is won it seems unlikely that the whole pattern will be reversed. Thus black power may have few resources to distribute the kind of patronage on which the exercise of political leadership must depend.

3. Changes in the economy will make it more difficult to promote the ideals of black capital self-help and self-sufficiency. The creation of black capital will largely be encouraged by stimulating the development of small business by reserving the Negro market for Negro businesses. But the commitment to the resuscitation of small business in the Ghetto will pose substantial problems. For one thing, all small business tend to have a high death rate, and there is every reason to assume that the rates of business failures within the

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1. The greater efficiency of ghetto controlled services was cogently presented in an article in the New York Times, July 17, 1968."A hospital worker serving a local Negro administrator may demand no more in wages than he obtained from an absentee bureaucracy, but he may deliver more services. A pupil in a school administered by a board of local citizens may cost no more to educate than now, but the pupil may find the experience more relevant. His education, thus, may become more productive." Ghetto control of social services may not be feasible if nonprofessionals are not recruited to man the social services bureaucracies.

the negro community will be as high, if not higher than they are in the rest of the community. Secondly, as the size of the middle income group (annual family income of $7,000) expands to half of the Negro families, as it now is among whites, "the large national corporations will find the Negro market increasingly attractive. Thus, these corporations are not about to withdraw and allow the Negro businessman to treat the Negro market as his special preserve." [1] It seems doubtful that a clash between the needs of black and white capital will rebound to the benefit of blacks.

It is also unlikely that the discussion about locating more plan of large industrial firms in the Ghetto, and creating more jobs as well as a black economic elite not rooted in the ownership of capital, but in its management will go very far. There has been a continued exit of manufacturing industries from central cities for the past 25 years because it is simply not sufficient for low capital, high labor intensive industry to function on the high land and tax rates in center cities.[2] And finally, of course, account must be taken of the changing distribution in the occupational structure, which, while it has not altogether eliminated the need for unskilled labor nor created the disjunction work and earnings which some have claimed, nevertheless has reduced the need for the kinds of skills which the Negro are most

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1. Quoted from a commencement address presented by Mr. Andrew F. Bresmer, a Negro member of the Federal Reserve Board, at Clark College. New York Times, June 4, 1968
2. For discussion of some of these issues, see Sumner M. Rosen's account of "Better Mousetrap: Reflections on Economic Development in the Ghetto," Mimeograph.

heavily employed in today. This trend will lead toward more public employment rather than the development of black capital or decentralized private corporations. But even if the creation of black capital with its intended emphasis on self-help and self-sufficiency were successful, it is much more likely to create greater economic inter-dependency between the white and the black community and hence a more subtle form of economic control. In periods of rapid economic expansion, (the gross national product increased by more than 40 billion in the first half of 1968) industry may be willing to buy stability at a token level by encouraging the development of black capital through loan guarantees, technical assistance and other devices. But as the size of the Negro ranks grows (Bremmer's argument) and/or as fluctuations in the economy produce periods of recession and a decline in industry profits, then economic realities may force a reassessment of the order acceptability of the principle of "black capital." In these periods of economic decline, white economic domination of the Ghetto may become visible, and anger will be directed, not only against welfare colonialism and political control of the Ghetto, but white capitalism as well.

If this interpretation seems valid it would seem important to reach out to the economic citadels in the white community and to tackle directly the problem of prejudice, especially at the professional managerial and white collar jobs. The legal

machinery needed to open up rather than wall-off socially is already in hand. A good deal of legislation has already been won which assures the Negro the right to vote, the right to equality of treatment before the Courts, the right to access for all publicly financed services, and the right to equal employment and open housing. But we have failed to provide the regulatory agencies with the power, the manpower, and the financial support which would permit them to implement these objectives.

Finally, we turn to the relevance of Long's argument. We need to consider whether the missing man thesis distorts the priorities of public policy by directing its attention to the problems of stability rather than justice. While it is true that the liberal, the militant, and the conservative have all directed their attention to black power, the goals they seek are after all quite different. One group is interested in a transfer of power. They want different actors to fill the present slots in the structure which distributes the positions of power and authority and influence. The new actors ought to be middle class blacks rather than middle class whites. In the transfer power strategy one major goal seems to be that of social stability and one major obstacle seems to be competence, following Long's analysis. There is fear on the part of the whites that power will be transferred without capability. What is wanted by the whites is competent blacks who can act as power brokers negotiating with white community in terms that will "cool out"the Ghetto.

But for other groups, more than a transfer of power to achieve social stability is being sought. Black power and student power have much in common in their search for a different society. They argue that the roots of American Society which has p produced the Vietnam War and the Negro crisis must themselves be poisoned. They want to tear the roots out and to plant afresh. But they are uncertain about what new seeds are needed to create blossoms of love, justice and humanity. The older radicals assumed that the need for authority and bureaucracy would whither away in the good society. But if these are the very source of evil and the whithering theory is repudiated, then we are left with cynicism or ideals which lack a program. The former leads to dropping out and the latter to a revolution without a platform

In conclusion, to break up the Ghetto social policy must emphasize the reduction of inequalities of income, full employment, not on the average but for special groups (such as the Ghetto residents and the Negro youth) and finally a vigorous program to reduce "institutional racism rather than personal racism" by creating "social and economic institutions in which all peoples have a sense of identification." [1]

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1. New York Times, April 28, 1968.